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ABSTRACT

This paper presents data from two in-depth studies to illustrate the importance of community involvement and staff development for improving schools. The first case study describes how community political action in a school district in southwestern Ohio spurred school reform. In "Riverside," a pseudonym, the black community sought to influence district policies by pressuring the superintendent and school board to address issues of long-standing concern. A conclusion is that sustained grassroots community action to produce school reform must include the vision and direction of community leaders, other powerful groups or figures, and leadership by the school-based administrator. The second case study examines the effect of Chicago's public school reform on staff development. Data were collected through interviews with teachers, administrators, parents, and community representatives and observation at four schools engaged in school improvement. A conclusion is that collaboration in staff development must be viewed from an ecological or interpretive paradigm, which focuses on the assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors that drive school-level decisions. In addition, school reform must be locally based, fixed in the community; and staff development must synthesize theory, research, and practitioner reflective thinking and involve collaboration among teachers, parents, and the community. (Contains 17 references.) (LMI)

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Community Involvement and Staff Development in School Improvement

William T. Pink and Kathryn M. Borman

Improving schools is a difficult task. Two issues are especially problematic in this process. First, those engaged in improving schools must develop consensus on the definition of an effective school and the goals a school should strive to realize. Once goals are determined, a second problem remain--that of developing consensus on both the strategy and the content of a restructuring model to achieve the objectives. Both issues are exacerbated in the case of urban schools situated in complex, hierarchical district contexts and located in communities characterized by both values and ethnic pluralism (Chubb and Moe 1990; Hess 1990; Pink 1990).

In recent years in the United States, the effective-schools literature has been the most accessible place for school reformers to seek help in resolving these and other school-restructuring issues (Brookover et al;, 1978; Edmonds 1979; Levine and Lezotte 1989). Here, already formulated, reformers have found (1) a powerfully seductive view of a (primarily elementary) school that promotes both equity and social justice by calling for schools to realize student acquisition of the basic curriculum independent of factors such as race and social class, and (2) a set of schoolwide "correlates" associated with student academic and additional outcomes. As schools embrace a school improvement strategy grounded in the mainstream school-effectiveness literature, they take on a series of domains for

attention such as strong leadership and an emphasis on basic skills.

While noting the caution that school improvement is a time-consuming activity and that change may result in measurable gains in student achievement only after several years, the literature, nonetheless, remains sanguine, proclaiming the successes of schools that have adopted and implemented the effective-schools model (Pink 1984; Project SHAL 1982; Teddie, Kirby and Stringfield, 1989). However, it is not simply intensive and extensive investment of time and energy that is required to bring about significant change. Schools seeking to create new structures and outcomes and to change rules, roles, and responsibilities must look beyond the effective schools rhetoric to mobilize individuals who will be fundamentally involved in creating change, namely, members of the surrounding community and members of the school staff.

In this chapter, we argue that the effective-schools model misses two elements that appear to be critical to the successful conceptualization and implementation of school improvement. They are community involvement and staff development. The effective-schools literature is virtually silent on these two elements although recent variants, such as Levin's Accelerated Schools, the so-called Comer Schools, and Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools, give these factors more emphasis (Fullan 1991; Pink 1986). If school improvement activities are successful, fundamental rather than cosmetic changes in existing practices

and school organization will occur. School improvement is dependent on two important features. The integration of parents and other community representatives as equal stakeholders with school-based educators in the conceptualization, implementation, and evaluation of school change is the first feature. The second involves construction of a staff development model--one that includes coordinated activities for teachers, administrators, and parents. Such activities should initially empower and subsequently support these key actors in their school improvement tasks.

A major point argued in this chapter is that successful collaboration among individuals who have a long history of confrontational relationships will not happen overnight, and may never occur unless staff development addresses and sustains productive interactions. While this statement may seem obvious to those working in the schools, evidence suggests that failure to recognize its importance, and to alter school practices that block the collaboration of parents, teachers, administrators, and community representatives, function to inhibit school reform based upon local decision making.

The remainder of this chapter will use case data from two in-depth studies to illustrate the importance of community involvement and staff development to improving schools. While both studies examine cities in the same region, the issues confronting each school district are very different.

Community Involvement: North Riverside Fails to Make Changes

In the United States, boosterism has long characterized a city's desire for an easily recognizable public image. Indeed, in his analysis of American cities, the sociologist Anselm Straus (1961) points to the importance to the citizenry in urban places of a widely understood, easily recognized identity that distinguishes one city from the next. Although we may speak of a broad American midwestern landscape, cities throughout the United States actively cultivate distinct community identities based on economic, sociocultural, and other indicators that allow them to differentiate themselves from other urban centers in this region and throughout the country.

The city of Riverside in southwestern Ohio is actually composed of two distinct sociocultural communities, although the city itself is a political entity governed by a single political structure including a mayor, city council, and city school superintendent. Thus, while citizens in both predominantly white North Riverside and exclusively black West Riverside elect the same mayor and enroll their children in the same school system, they have separate community allegiances and institutions. These include community recreational centers, churches, and informal social groups. Historically, the city's formal political bodies, including both the city council and the school board, have not had elected representation from the black community. Blacks, therefore, have invested their energy in neighborhood-based

formal and informal institutions.

Compounding the issue is the fact that although both communities are working-class enclaves, they have had different and distinct racial compositions and have varied in the sizes of their populations. While the white community of North Riverside has a population currently close to eleven thouseand, the black citizens of West Riverside number less than forty-eight hundred. Although both communities are largely made up of homeowners, property values in the primarily white North Riverside community are much higher, on the average ($47,000 vs. $23,000). Finally, the two communities, particularly with regard to educational issues, have historically experienced an uneasy alliance under a single political structure. For example, when the North Riverside district was mandated by state law to desegregate its elementary schools in 1957, the closing of Sterne School in the West Riverside community fanned hostilities. It was widely understood that Sterne, although a relatively new and well-appointed facility, was targeted for razing to appease the white residents of adjacent North Riverside who had no desire to send their children to a school in the black West Riverside community.1

The influential, primarily white citizens of North Riverside see their community as struggling to maintain its integrity as a family-oriented, hard-working, and caring community with relatively low real estate taxes. Its location immediately north of a large midwestern city has limited its growth as a major

population and industrial center. Indeed, the city throughout its development has been and continues to be a bedroom community, but one with appealing amenities despite its working class character. It is a highly conservative community, and its local business association has actively attempted to draw commercial enterprises to the city. Specifically, Don Banks, the city mayor, placed the expansion and improvement of the city's business district as a primary goal when he took office in 1988. His dream has been to transform North Riverside into the "shopping center of the northern hills area." An expanded service-sector base would, of course, translate into additional tax dollars for the community. These dollars have been badly needed by the city to improve sidewalks, streets, and other aspects of the infrastructure, including the city's two elementary schools and combined junior-senior high school.

Insufficient operating funds to manage the school district was only one of several concerns that plagued the new school superintendent, Solomon Williams, when he was selected as the new superintendent in the late spring of 1988. Having suffered a series of financial catastrophes as a result of a number of failed tax levies and the fiscal mismanagement of a recent superintendent, the district was sent reeling in April 1988 when a midmorning fistfight among several students in the North Riverside High School building closed the school for the day and charges surfaced from West Riverside parents of pervasive racial inequities.

Despite repercussions from the racial confrontations during Williams's first year in office, voters in the North Riverside school district, including both North and West Riverside, passed the school district's $8.9 million operating levy, casting 1,754 votes for and 1,239 against (58.6 percent to 41.4 percent). The levy generated $750,000 for operating expenses, offsetting a projected $683,000 deficit that the district anticipated by June of that year (1989). Williams reflected on the favorable outcome of the levy to a reporter from the suburban press in this way: "I think that we had a nucleus of people who were convinced of the need for the levy. It is typical of the North Riverside community that when there is something essential, they respond in kind."

The identity of North Riverside as a community that rallies behind a common cause to support its local institutions is clear in the superintendent's rhetoric. However, given the basic differences between the two enclaves, when a crisis arose, as in the aftermath of the April fistfight at the high school, the two communities responded quite differently. The analysis that follows illustrates how the black community of West Riverside in particular created its own agenda for reform and change in the schools.

West Riverside's Strategies

Several strategies contributed to the increased visibility and political strength of the black West Riverside community in the months following the spring, 1988 fistfight. They include

(1) recognizing and utilizing local, state, and national sources of political pressure to bring to bear on the school system administration, (2) influencing the media, (3) eliciting the participation and subsequently monitoring activities of the university-based evaluators of the district's racial climate, who came on the scene in July 1988 and (4) putting forward a community-supported candidate for political office in the fall of 1989.

Political activities ultimately resulted in pressure on the new superintendent and his school board to address issues of long standing concern to the West Riverside community, namely lack of diversity at the administrative staff level, widespread absenteeism and suspension of black students, teacher over- and underreaction to student cultural differences, and lowered expectations for black students' academic performance. These complemented a host of issues at the school level, including fair administration of discipline, equitable assignments, homework, course placement, and parent governance. Also, students in the high school reported tensions in the hallways and cafeteria at school events and sports competitions at other schools.

The black community's efforts to influence district policies arose initially in response to the district's poor handling of the fistfight by attempting to dismiss it as a nonevent. First, members of the West Riverside community, through its local community council, formed the Student Affairs Committee (SAC) and elected an articulate, politically sophisticated chair. Its

mission statement asserted that SAC's purpose was to bring about positive changes in the district, specifically in relation to practices, policies, programs, and personnel, in order to benefit all students by creating a "better, more productive educational atmosphere" via a process that was "logical, peaceful, bi-partisan, and harmonious."

Next, a letter written to the state superintendent of instruction requesting intervention was filed in Columbus. The letter charged the district with (1) The psychological oppression and physical abuse of black students, (2) the failure to recruit and hire blacks as administrators or to elect black representatives to the school board, and (3) the fiscal irresponsibility of the former administration, which had lead directly to "a decrease in teacher morale and an increase in teacher apathy toward students, especially black students." The SAC also sent copies of the letter to a number of highly influential politicians, including the two prominent U.S. senators from Ohio, John Glenn and Howard Metzenbaum, in addition to then U.S. secretary of education, William Bennett.

The immediate response of the district to this flurry of political activity in the black community was to propose to SAC leaders that "a cultural assessment" of the district be conducted by a neutral third party. There is little question that the district, in agreeing to carry out an evaluation of its practices was not only responding to the demands of the highly vocal West Riverside community, but was also bowing to pressure from the

state superintendent's office. This office, sensitive to both community concerns and the district's financial perils, provided $5,000 to partially support a year-long evaluation of district practices, requesting that the district provide an equal sum. The superintendent then approached the dean of the college of education at the local university to get a neutral, third-party assessment of district practices. A faculty-graduate student team was organized to design and implement an evaluation plan. State department of education dollars were used to leverage additional funds from local foundations. When it was completed, the evaluation of the district, in sum, provided both the black community (and particularly its political arm, the Student Affairs Committee) and the district with a number of recommendations based on responses to surveys and interviews conducted with district teachers, administrative staff, students, and parents. The recommended action steps encompassed several areas: multicultural education, race relations, administrative practices, and home-school relations. For example, in the area of multicultural education, the report recommended that the district establish a resource center at each school, housing "culturally inclusive" instructional materials for use by teachers. In addition, the absence of representation for the West Riverside community on the school board was seen as a perennial problem. Election to the board is conducted at-large in the district, a practice that had contributed to the fact that a black member has never served on the board. In this connection

we recommended that the school board and administration position black community leaders to receive electoral support from the white community by recognizing their leadership and drawing West Riverside activists into policy deliberations.

Because the West Riverside community remained mobilized around these issues for more than a year following the April fistfight and through the period of study, it was able to campaign for a community representative to the school board in November, four months after the release of the report. The superintendent, who had at one point assured the research team that he would support such a candidate, became indifferent to the black community following the successful passage of the school levy shortly before the report was released in June 1989. Although the candidate put forward by the African-American community had superior credentials including a doctoral degree in political science, and an impeccable reputation as a highly regarded minister, he was defeated by his white opponent.

The defeat of this outstanding candidate despite his well-organized and effective campaign in addition to the withdrawal of the Student Affairs Committee's vocal and energetic chair, seemed to cripple the effectiveness of SAC and indeed of the West Riverside community as a whole. Although the superintendent kept discussion of the report alive in the district through regularly scheduled meetings of a task force he had organized for this purpose, the task force appeared to lack focus and concluded its year-long effort without recommending changes in district

policies. Without the presence of vocal leadership in the community or continuing pressure from the state superintendent's office, this outcome was not surprising.

It was clear during our follow-up interview nine months after the release of the report that the superintendent considered our presence in the district to be intrusive and unhelpful, legitimating the district's indifference toward the report's recommended action steps. In fact, the superintendent threatened to attend the national meeting of a major educational research association (AERA) to "defend the district" against what he perceived to be our inaccurate portrayal of North Riverside's "cultural environment."

Given this unhappy ending to the story, are there any guidelines that can be put forward to assist in understanding how grassroots community action can be sustained and mobilized effectively to produce change in school district policies and practices? We think that there are at least three:

1. The vision and direction of vocal and well-respected community leaders is essential. Leadership may be present in one person, or it may be present in an active group, such as the SAC, that sustains and provides momentum for the community's political agenda.
2. In the case of disenfranchised groups, as was true here, other powerful groups or figures, especially those with authority to censure the district, can helpfully serve as monitors of the progress toward change and the redirection

of district policies and practices.

3. Whether by coercion or by moral force, the appropriate school-based administrator (the superintendent, as was the case here) must provide the leadership to the district to achieve the goal of quality integrated education. Clearly, in this case, Superintendent Williams's leadership was superficial and expedient.

   Moreover, the majority of the community's white residents, like the superintendent, simply wanted the problem to go away without their having to do anything about it. In his defense, the superintendent had taken on a district beleaguered by enormous debt and low morale, especially among the teachers of the district. Nonetheless, the he missed an opportunity to pursue objectives that, had he worked collegially with community leaders, might have led to the creation of what the community most desired - "a better, more productive educational atmosphere."

We believe these three postulates are transferable to other school district contexts. All three have the force of moral suasion and call upon a district's and community's finest motives.

Staff Development: Chicago Seeks to Reform Its Schools

The ambitious attempt to reform Chicago's schools is predicated upon the democratic control of schools at the local level. However, without rethinking staff development, designed explicitly to enable the key actors to work productively together

and make good decisions based on appropriate theory, research, and practitioner reflection, school reform in Chicago is likely to remain mired in a web of ethnic distrust, localized power politics, and uninformed "faddish" practices.

Chicago is one of the major cities in the United States. It has a rich variety of older, ethnically diverse neighborhoods and is surrounded by a number of suburban communities that are largely white-collar and more affluent. It is rich in culture, commerce, industry, and architectural significance. Its central location has made Chicago a major transportation center. Recently, it has changed its image from being the "butcher to the world" and the home of Al Capone to being an exciting tourist and convention attraction.

The rich ethnic diversity of Chicago has made its politics world renowned--"vote early and often" remains an oft-heard comment at election time. Long dominated by Mayor Richard J. Daley (1955-76), ward politics has helped fashion a thriving city, virtually impervious to economic recession. However, these same ward politics have had two related negative consequences. The involvement of some minorities in city government and its "spoils" system has been limited and has contributed to the creation of a school system that has become significantly less effective at the same time as its students have become progressively more black, Hispanic, and Asian. While the city school system is the third largest in the country (behind New York and Los Angeles), enrolling approximately 450,000 students,

there are also approximately 750 private schools enrolling an additional 250,000 students.

In the last ten years, the Chicago Public Schools have had a succession of black superintendents (Ruth Love, Manfred Byrd, and Ted Kimbrough) and have undergone fiscal crises, reorganizations, teacher strikes, reduced enrollments, and declining student achievement. Historically, the school board has been appointed by the mayor, and the large district, with close to six-hundred schools, has been managed through twenty-one subdistrict offices. It is only in the last two years that the school board has been selected by the mayor from slates provided by a citizens' committee.

Chicago's Education Reform Act of 1988 mandated major changes in the ways that the city schools do business. Interestingly, neither the current mayor (Richard M. Daley), the current superintendent (Ted Kimbrough), nor the current school board played any significant role in conceptualizing the Reform Act and moving it through the legislative process.

The major push for reforming the Chicago schools has come from the business community, whose primary concern was that too many graduates were unemployable, in addition to several public interest groups, primarily concerned about declining student achievement, and too-frequent teacher strikes. Local neighborhood community dismay about the quality and responsiveness of schools has also been a factor. The Reform Act symbolizes a significant event in the history of Chicago. It is

one of the few times when ethnic and ward politics have been put aside to achieve a common goal, namely, school reform.

To address key themes in the reform of Chicago schools, the remainder of this chapter is organized in four sections: (1) a brief background to the recent reform legislation; (2) an examination of the various types of collaboration mandated by the reform legislation; (3) a discussion of how collaborative arrangements are working currently; and (4) a conclusion in which we offer a new conception for staff development. The latter addresses the importance of involving teachers, administrators, parents, and community representatives working together in sustained individual growth activities that target both interpersonal skills and state-of-the-art knowledge about teaching, learning and school change.

The Chicago Reform Legislation

To better understand the importance of collaboration in the "new" governance of Chicago's schools, a brief summary of the evolution of the reform legislation follows. We will emphasize three major events.[3]

The first milestone was the passage of the Urban School Improvement Act (PA#84-749) in 1985. This state-level action was a response to the financial bankruptcy of the district, which had been ongoing since 1979. The Urban School Improvement Act compelled the devolvement of power from a highly bureaucratic central office and provided parents new powers through school-based local school improvement councils (LSICs) to develop three-

year school improvement plans (SIPS). However, this legislation also greatly restricted parental involvement by mandating both achievement goals for schools and a set of operating policies for councils.

Interestingly, the act contained a provision for promoting "staff improvement and stability." The language stated, however, that schools "may" develop a staff development plan--no money was set aside to support such a plan. Subsequent legislation has also ignored staff development.

The act also changed the role of the principal. Principals were charged to (1) form the LSIC, (2) aid in the development of the SIP, and (3) subsequently implement the SIP. Changed roles for both parents and principal are problematic because inner-city parents--primarily young, poor, and undereducated--generally lack the skills to work on committees to develop a SIP, while many principals are ill-prepared to share authority with parents and teachers or to govern their schools free of central-office mandates. In addition, white, middle-class leaders frequently lack the skills to recognize and utilize low-income leadership skills and experiences.

Second, in 1987, Mayor Harold Washington, the first black mayor of Chicago, formed an Education Summit to address a range of issues. The summit was the result of the heated, vocal discontent in the city between parents, teachers, and the business community concerning consistently falling test scores, escalating disciplinary problems, a high dropout rate, and a

recent protracted teacher strike. Mayor Washington convened the major stakeholder groups--teachers' union, school administrators, business leaders and parent and community groups--to enter into a sustained negotiation about the future of public education and jobs in the city.

The mayor had no specific package of reforms in mind. In fact, Washington's style, beyond an infrequent appointment to the school board, had been a "hands-off" approach to education in the city. The expectation was that ideas would emerge from community-based public dialogue, percolating to the top from the wards. The balance of the summit's fifty-four representatives by design favored nonprofessional, parent and community representatives (44 percent) over professional (19 percent) representatives. The prevailing idea in the mayor's office and in much of the business community was that professional educators had created the mess in the schools and were thus unlikely or unable to clean it up. As the political forces were played out in this highly visible forum--a forum that included several public hearings where parents gave testimony "on the record"--the ideas of influential public interest groups, that is, Designs for Change and the Chicago Panel on Public School Finance (CHIPS), concerning democratic localism and school-based decision making, emerged as the foundational ideas for a reform model. A major outcome of the process followed in Chicago is that parents, rather than school board employees as in New York City's decentralization efforts in the 1970s, became the key decision

makers about changes in the schools.

At the mayor's untimely death (November 1987), the power base shifted to Springfield, the state capital. Extensive lobbying followed--by teachers, parents, public interest groups, and business leaders. Those most able to articulate a reform bill, the public interest groups and the business leaders, played the major role in shaping the resultant legislation.

Finally, Senate Bill 1839 was passed in 1988 and contained much of the intent and language of Mayor Washington's earlier Education Summit activity. A slightly amended bill (SB 1840) was subsequently signed into law by Governor Thompson in the fall of 1988. Parents gained significantly in this legislation: (1) Parents, through majority membership on the newly mandated local school council (LSC), have the authority to hire and fire the principal; (2) parents approve the school-based budget, which includes the allocation of Chapter I and other discretionary funds; and (3) parents approve the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

The local school council at each school (comprising six parents elected by parents, two teachers elected by teachers in the school, the principal, and two community representatives elected by the community) has become the centerpiece of school governance. Significant regulatory and decision-making powers have been devolved from the central office under the rubric of the "central support system." Principals must function within a changed environment. They must consult regularly with the LSC about the SIP, annual expenditures, new hires, and the physical

plant. They must also work collaboratively with both teachers and parents on issues concerning discipline, attendance policies, and the instructional program.

The five-year evolutionary process in Chicago is interesting because it illustrates the difficulties for parents of gaining access to the decision-making process in a large urban school system. In this case, however, the scope of the involvement they have won is sweeping, and the potential for changing schools is great. Time alone will indicate their effectiveness in improving schools for their children. The grand experiment is too new to make summative pronouncements, but we can make some preliminary observations.

Predictably, the first year (1989-90) for the schools under the new legislated governance structure was difficult. With relatively little support from the central office, schools struggled (1) to elect members to the LSC, (2) to develop a SIP and an operational budget, and (3) to make a decision, as occurred in 50 percent of the schools in the first year, on releasing or retaining the principal. These were difficult tasks to complete, for urban parents confronted for the first time with such decision-making powers in a public forum.

Parental and community involvement in conceptualizing and implementing school improvement is critical to fundamental change both in the organizational features of the school and in practices concerning teaching and learning (Hess and Easton 1991). However, the prior history of the Chicago Public Schools

is replete with examples of governance by centralized top-down policy mandates and educational stagnation. LSCs in their first year varied in their levels of success. Less successful LSCs are those with principals unwilling or unable to share authority and where attendance at and/or participation in Council meetings is low. More successful are those LSCs that are functioning well as decision-making teams as they begin to entertain serious questions about curricula and instruction. This bold and innovative governance structure holds much promise for effecting significant school reforms (Easton and Storey 1990).

Types of Collaboration Mandated by the Reform Legislation

The Reform Act changed both the balance of power and the system of decision making in the Chicago schools. The long-established pattern of oppressive central-office control, a system that required strict adherence to standard operating procedures, was abolished in a single legislative act. It was replaced by a system that required the "local school community" to govern itself. While novel for a system with a very long history of dependency on an "imperial" central office, it also created a set of collaborative arrangements that placed many actors, several for the first time, on the same side of the table with respect to school improvement. Several key collaborations were created by the reform legislation:

1. Collaboration among members of the Local School Council (LSC). In this context six parents, two teachers, two

community representatives, and the principal are charged to make policy for their school. Power has shifted from the principal to the council. There is considerable role ambiguity and a range of expertise in the council that may polarize council members or that may heighten the group's inability to act creatively and resourcefully.

2. Collaboration between the LSC and the principal. Now the principal works for a council that has the authority to hire and fire, yet the principal must administer the school. How are power and decision-making negotiated? What role(s) can the principals play with his or her new "employers"?

3. Collaboration between the LSC and the District Superintendent's Office (DS) and the central office, now renamed the Central Service System. The reform legislation has moved decision making from both the central office and the subdistrict offices and placed it at the school level. Yet the LSC must continue to do business with both of these offices, even as all the actors must work to define new roles for themselves. Who decides what is sill unclear. Who decides who decides is perhaps even more problematic.

4. Collaboration among the LSC, parents <u>not</u> sitting on the LSC, and the greater community the school serves. Moving decision making to the schools gives responsibility and new roles to previously disenfranchised groups. Does the creation of the council focus decision-making power in the

hands of fewer or more stakeholders? How are the wider interests of parents given "voice" in the council deliberations?

5. Collaboration between the LSC and PPAC. The Reform Act created the Professional Personnel Advisory Committee (PPAC) to provide teachers a way to influence school improvement at the building level. Teachers can decide how to structure this committee--some schools have elected members, others have operated as a committee of the whole. The problem is that there is no formal mechanism beyond the two teacher representatives on the LSC to represent teacher views. The PPAC is an advisory body. How can the broad range of teacher expertise be given an appropriate "voice" in the new governance structure? To what degree does community empowerment restrict teachers' empowerment?

6. Collaboration between the LSC and public interest groups interested in providing "training" to assist school reform. Here, as with other factors, new working relationships need to be created as an outcome of the reform legislation. Schools have had little experience designing their <u>own</u> staff development needs, while outside agencies frequently have a view of effective schools and reform that they are all too happy to package and bring to the schools. What is the appropriate role of the not-for-profits and the business community in shaping school goals and staff development programs? Where does support stop and advocacy begin?

7. Collaboration among the LSC, PPAC, principal, and local universities. Again, the new governance structure creates the opportunity for different kinds of collaboration among these groups and the resources of the universities. The issue is, who is controlling the school improvement and staff development activities? What models of staff development do university "change agents" bring to school reform activities? What is the impact of unequal access to knowledge about school change and best instructional practices on the shape, scope, and pace of school reform?

This list illustrates the kinds of collaborative arrangements created by the reform legislation that have surfaced during the first two years. All these arrangements require both new roles and new game rules. Not only does it take time to develop new roles and game rules, but the process is further complicated when actors come to the table with (1) differing cultural beliefs and expectations about schooling, learning, and change, (2) differing levels of sophistication concerning the dynamics of group decision making, and (3) differential knowledge and access to "best practices" concerning schooling, learning, and change. The next section will explore these issues in greater depth.

How Is Collaboration Working in Year 2 of the Reform Act?

To begin to find answers to questions about how well these new collaborative arrangements are working, the first author drew on two sources of data. One source was initial interview data

gathered from teachers, administrators, parents, and community representatives collected as part of a citywide survey of stakeholders concerning the future research needs in the Chicago Public Schools. These interviews were conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research. In each individual or focus group interview a standard protocol was used. These data are useful because they reveal perceptions of what is and what isn't working from the viewpoints of several stakeholder groups.

The second source of data is interviews with and observations of teachers, administrators, parents, and community representatives actively engaged in a school improvement project involving outside "change agents" in four schools. These four predominantly black low income elementary schools are working with the Center for School Improvement, a consortium of the Chicago Public Schools, National-Louis University, and the University of Chicago. Two of the schools are also members of the School-Parent-Community Project conducted by National-Louis University that is designed to provide assistance in implementing reforms in reading and writing.

In analyzing data concerning collaboration from both the stakeholder survey and the subsequent interviews and observations of actively engaged reformers, several clear patterns emerge. These patterns are informative because they highlight the problematics of expecting collaboration without providing support for preparing and sustaining the actors in this new activity. It reveals, unfortunately, a second example of mandating a top-down

change in a school district while ignoring the need to plan for and support both fiscally and with personnel, the mandated behaviors. To illustrate these problems, themes for each of the first three collaborations are outlined in the three sections that follow.

Collaboration among Members of the Local School Council

A number of themes surfaced from interviews and observations concerning the difficulties of initiating and sustaining collaboration among six parents, two teachers, two community representatives and the principal. These six themes were also apparent in the earlier survey:

1. Individuals on the LSC come with vastly different perceptions of their roles and agendas for reforming schools. Some parents and community representatives, come with the agenda to advance themselves politically, others to advocate exclusively for a racial or ethnic segment of the school population. Many come to the LSC with the perception that they will "run the school" and make every decision for the principal. Fair representation of the diversity of the community was also seen as problematic when many groups were unable to elect their own candidate to the LSC. Who talks for them in LSC deliberations? Team building and developing a common vision for the school were also seen as highly problematic.

2. Individuals come to the LSC with different kinds of experiences concerning "procedures for organizing and running a meeting" and with divergent views concerning substantive issues germane to school improvement. The way parents and community representatives can play a role equal in status to professionally-trained peers, teachers, and the principal is problematic.

3. The chair of the LSC, mandated to be a parent, is frequently elected on the basis of popularity. His or her inability to manage sometimes-hostile audience participation, and to organize and orchestrate the agenda results in less-productive meetings.

4. LSCs have difficulty prioritizing issues vis-a-vis school improvement. The different agendas (see #1) brought by members of the LSC tend to fragment the LSC around items of self-interest (e.g., hiring and firing of relatives, sequencing of buses at dismissal, firing all white teachers vs. school improvement issues involving pedagogy and instructional materials). Problematic, again, is the limited ability, at least in the short term to forge a collaborative approach to problem definition and solution.

5. The lack of consistent attendance by LSC members makes gaining a quorum impossible. Decision making is compromised when members of the LSC "dropout, but don't resign." Procedures for replacement are not yet widely known.

6. There is a lack of vision concerning both the intent and scope of the LSC--a function of years of dependency on an "imperial" central office. LSCs have difficulty under standing the differences between policy and implementation.

Parents and community representatives are getting some information about their schools for the first time. Thus, there is much interest in confronting the principal about issues that should not concern them, while ignoring larger issues of policy that should concern them--since the principal cannot chair the LSC, he or she is at the mercy of the chair in these deliberations. Agenda setting and developing a vision for each school is seen as a cause for concern.

Collaborations between the LSC and the Principal

The reform legislation changes the nature of the principalship in the Chicago Public Schools. Principals lose their tenure and seniority in the system and are now hired and fired by the LSC on a four-year term. They have been shifted from being the decision maker in the school, working for the central office, to being one member of an eleven member team (the LSC) responsible for making decisions about how that school will operate. Three themes concerning this collaborative activity emerged across the interview and observational data:

1. The question "Who is in control?" has yet to be resolved in most schools. In many schools it has been difficult for principals to share power with the LSCs and for the LSC to

assume power previously unavailable to them. This new governance structure is seen by those closest to it as both complex and fluid. Some principals have been frustrated by what they perceive as slow progress in approving and implementing the SIP and have responded by dominating the LSC by manipulating the agenda items and controlling the time in LSC meetings available for parent participation from the floor. In other cases, principals have become so concerned about job security that they have avoided making controversial (but needed) decisions. The mechanisms for negotiating the operational rules of the LSCs are not yet in place--there are few guidelines in the legislation to resolve such problems.

2. Members of the LSC see access to information as important to their ability to make informed decisions. A common concern voiced by LSC members was principals who withheld information to influence decision making. This demonstrates for LSC members a "lack of trust" on the part of the principal. Information about the budget and the legalities of alternative solutions to policy issues surfaced most frequently.

3. Teachers serving on the LSC sometimes find themselves compromised in "voting their conscience" against the wishes of the principal, when the principal must legally complete their evaluation. The role relationships among the various members of the LSC need clarification.

Collaboration among the LSC, the District Superintendent's Office, and the Central Office (Central Service Center)

The Educational Reform Act created the LSC while removing decision-making power from the central office and the subdistrict superintendent's office. In doing so, the relationships among these three entities were not clearly spelled out. Four themes emerged from the data concerning what is currently occurring:

1. Role ambiguity currently exists throughout the Chicago Public Schools. The question "Who is responsible for what decisions?" surfaced in every stakeholder group. LSC members report calling the central office and being passed from one telephone station to another--"nobody wishing to be quoted as giving information"--and being told by their subdistrict superintendent to call the central office if they need information. They express considerable frustration when trying to understand "what is going on."
2. The lack of general information and data about their own school available from the central ffice is seen as a major roadblock to decision making by the LSCs. Questions about budget issues and the legalities of doing things differently (e.g., evaluating the principal and developing ways to spend discretionary funds) are the items most frequently mentioned. There is a strong suspicion voiced by LSC members that this lack of information is intentional, because they perceive that the central office is opposed to

the reform legislation and want to see parents fail.

3. The subdistrict superintendents perceive themselves in limbo as a result of the legislation. They feel unconnected to the central office (they are now hired by a district council made up of one representative from each LSC in that subdistrict) and yet "relatively powerless" to help LSCs in significant ways because they have "limited staff and almost no operating budget." Again, role ambiguity and unclear lines of communication act as barriers to successful governance.

4. Local community governance, as mandated by the reform legislation, is viewed by many as signaling the dissolution of the Chicago Public Schools. Unclear to many is how individually governed schools can be a part of a school district--many LSC members, previous disenfranchised by the bureaucracy of the Chicago Public Schools, are distrustful of the motives of the central office. The tension is between those who see the individual school as the only focus for educational improvement and those who see a continuing leadership role for centralized services. Presently, there is a lack of clarity concerning which model of governance is currently in place and no consensus concerning which governance model would be "best" for Chicago's schools.

Putting Collaboration as the Centerpiece of Reform

With respect to the question of how well these new collaborative arrangements are working in the Chicago Public Schools, we must say that it is too soon to offer a definitive answer. Presently, however, there are a number of problems that make the development of productive collaboration problematic. While some schools have created strong and productive decision-making structures, most are struggling to create an organization that supports collaborative decision making.

Interviews and observations with teachers, administrators, parents, and community representatives indicate that visions of improved schools fail to recognize or acknowledge (1) that productive collaboration among all the actors in the new governance system must be the centerpiece of school improvement, and (2) that schools must develop sustained staff development activities and must nurture such productive collaboration. Almost without exception, visions of "good schools" were framed in some variant of the "effective schools" model and thus ignored both collaborative governance and staff development. The following list is typical of components included in visions of good schools:

1. Children and staff are safe.
2. Children are actively involved in learning. and they are happy to be there
3. The school staff believes their students can succeed.
4. The principal is strong and actively promotes a school vision and sets a positive school climate.
5. The physical plant is safe and conducive to learning.

We suggest that without a shift in focus that mobilizes staff development activities designed to improve the various

collaborative arrangements mandated by the reform legislation, school reform in Chicago will continue to be stalled by a combination of ethnic distrust, local politics and uninformed decision making about school improvement activities.

CONCLUSION

Staff development remains a missing element in school reform (Pink 1986). Where staff development activities do exist, they are often based on a deficit model of teachers' and parents' skills and abilities. Staff development grounded in the dominant positivistic paradigm seeks to remediate teachers' perceived technical and instructional weaknesses. However, staff development grounded in an ecological or interpretive paradigm seeks to engage all those playing a role in school improvement (e.g., teachers, administrators, parents, and community representatives) in an examination of their taken-for-granted assumptions, beliefs, and values, which, in turn, drive their behaviors and conceptions about school improvement (Pink and Hyde 1992).

Clearly, the paradigm employed governs the discourse about school improvement. Those using a positivistic (process-product) paradigm view school improvement primarily as a process of "tightening-up" teacher behavior in the classroom (see figure 7.1). Thus, emphasis in staff development is placed on eliminating teachers' perceived weaknesses through activities such as
"active teaching," "time on task," and "assertive discipline."

In this paradigm, issues concerning pedagogy, school organization, and even curriculum content become reduced to "training" teachers and parents to use the "effective" behaviors and techniques in order to produce greater student achievement on standardized tests.

In contrast, those employing an ecological (Shulman 1986) or interpretive (Erickson 1986) paradigm place a very different emphasis on staff development (see figure 7.2). Here school improvement turns on the taken-for-granted assumptions of all the major actors, not only teachers, concerning learning, together with an understanding of the cultural context of the school. Staff development now focuses on an extended examination of assumptions, beliefs, conceptions and behaviors that drive school-level pedagogical, organizational, and curricular decisions.

We suggest that collaboration must be viewed from an ecological or interpretive paradigm. When this happens, staff development can be focused on an extended examination of the problematics of collaboration and the subsequent development of activities that facilitate productive collaborative arrangements. In short, collaboration itself is made problematic and staff development systematically interrogates the elements that make it so.

In addition, school reform must be locally based, fixed in the community. Collaboration in this context must lead to (1) development of a shared vision for schools (with each school

developing its own vision), and (2) the development of school improvement strategies generated via consensus by an LSC or a similar body. To continue to ignore how best to achieve these two goals, is to keep the journey for school reform in a permanent stall. Staff development, reconceptualized in an ecological or interpretive paradigm and targeted specifically to correct this stall, must synthesize theory, research, and practitioner reflection (Pink and Hyde, 1992). When a staff development program is based on theory, research, and practitioner reflective thinking, and linked to collaborative work on tasks that teachers, parents, and community representatives perceive to be important, school improvement efforts are likely to be successful in the short term and, perhaps most importantly, sustained over time. The importance of destroying the myth of the one-size-fits-all staff development program cannot be over emphasized (Pink 1990). The culture of individual schools must be fully understood, personnel and fiscal resources must be available, and school improvement must remain a top priority at the district level (Pink 1984, 1992a).

In addition, in order for improvement activities to change urban schools, the problem of schools' failure to educate children at risk must be perceived not only as a technical one but also as a political one (Apple 1987; Pink 1992b; Williams 1989). As has been demonstrated elsewhere, when an effectively organized neighborhood group interacts regularly and over the long term with both the district and the individual school to

advise, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of reform activities, outcomes can be impressive. Specifically, such grassroots political engagement can improve the climate of the school, alter ineffective or harmful policies, and attract resources (Williams 1989; Borman et. al, 1990).

The major objective of this chapter has been to explore how staff development and community political action can spur school reform in two settings. A second objective has been to suggest strategies for teachers, parents, and neighborhood citizens to begin to work collaboratively in local schools to effect school improvement. In our work, outcomes of these efforts have focused on activities such as decreased absenteeism; lessened teacher over-or underreaction to student cultural differences and subsequent lowered expectations of students enhanced parent governance structures, and fair administration of discipline, homework, classroom, and course assignments.

A particularly pressing question that we have attempted to address here is, How do specific sites successfully solve the problem of goal displacement? A "you do it for us" mentality by which parents, teachers, or administrators will have <u>their</u> issue highlighted can destroy essential cooperative planning, monitoring, and evaluating efforts. A second question concerns the various ways schools can best mobilize school and community resources to collaborate to conceptualize, implement, and evaluate a school improvement plan. A third question focuses on the role and "custom design" of staff development to support the

conceptualization, implementation, and evaluation of the school improvement plan. We see this chapter making an important contribution to framing key concerns for the success of school improvement activities at the district and school-site levels.

As schools wrestle to reform themselves, it is evident that they must think in bold and innovative ways. As the saying goes (with a minor addition): "if you continue to do what you have always done--and think in ways you have always thought--you will continue to get what you have always gotten."

Notes

1. School board meeting minutes from this period contain a quite candid account of the response of both communities to the desegregation plan that included the closing of Sterne School. These minutes contain lengthy discussion by the members of the all-white board at this time.

2. Because anonymity has been requested by the Superintendent, a full citation of the report cannot be provided here. However, a chapter written by researchers Kathryn Borman, Patricia Z. Timm, Zakia El Amin, and Markay Winston, based on the report, appears in Research Directions for Multicultural Educations, edited by Carl Grant (New York, Falmer, 1992).

3. The development of the reform effort in Chicago is given comprehensive treatment in Hess' (1990) account of the same period.

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